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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, October 17, 1935

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "HOUSEHOLD PEACE-MAKERS." Information from the Extension Service, United States Department of Agriculture.

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My next-door neighbor tells me that the coat closet in her front hall is largely responsible for the most peaceful winter her family ever experienced. She says she and her family endured an old, dark, inconvenient hole of a closet for 15 years before she had the idea of remodeling it. Just about a year ago, she got busy with some plans sent by the clothing specialist at the State College. She modernized that closet. And presto -- peace descended on her household.

Well, until my neighbor began talking about it, I never thought of a closet as a family peace-maker. But here's the picture she paints of the typical American family getting off to school and work on a winter morning.

"Mother, where's my hat and coat?"

"I can't find my arithmetic book anywhere."

"Mother, I've lost one of my gloves."

"No, John, you cannot go out without your overshoes. You'll have to find them whether you are late or not."

"Is there an umbrella anywhere in this house? Or must I go to work this rainy morning without one?"

And so forth and so on.

Before the remodeling of her family's coat closet my neighbor says a hubbub like this broke loose right after breakfast every week-day. "We had battles and tears and cross words and general tumult all because we had no convenient place to put things," she says.

Maybe you'd like to hear how my neighbor made her closet so comfortable and convenient. The first step was to give it light and air. No dark place can ever be convenient for storage, particularly for articles in everyday use. Moreover, clothes need light and air to protect them from moths. So she persuaded her husband to cut a window in the outside wall. Then, she painted both the walls and woodwork a glossy cream-white. "You'd be surprised how a coat of white or light-colored paint lightens a room," she says. She used gloss paint because it reflects light and is easier to clean than flat paint. For night use, she has a flash-light on a little shelf right by the door, but she hopes some day to have a good electric lamp in the ceiling of the closet.



So much for light. Now about equipment. Along one wall, she put a rod holding hangers for the grown-ups' coats. Above it she built a shelf for the grown-ups' hats. For the smaller members of the family who haven't as long a reach, she put an extension rod on the door, with small hangers on it. Across on the other wall, she built a tier of shelves from the floor up, about 10 inches deep and all separated in partitions of the right size to hold the children's hats, caps, gloves, purses, school books, and so on. The lowest shelves held rubbers and overshoes. The highest shelves were for the taller children. Over the radiator she put a shelf for drying wet mittens, caps, and so on. And on one wall she put in a few hooks for umbrellas.

Anybody handy with a hammer and saw could make a convenient closet like this. And anybody who believes in peace would find it well worth while.

Well, if you want helpful plans for a closet in any part of the house, write your State college or the home demonstration agent in your county. Or read some of the good magazine articles on the subject.

I have a few other peace-making ideas. Here's one for northern homes: a small child's broom hanging just outside the back door, so the younger members of the family can brush off snow from their overshoes and leggings before they come indoors.

Here's an idea to keep Father peaceful while he shaves -- a small mirror set on the window ledge at just the right height to reflect his face -- or set between two windows in the bathroom. A mirror in such a position gives the very best light for shaving. Sister will appreciate it, too, when she's putting on powder in the morning. You know, many people don't make the most of their mirrors -- don't hang them to give the best reflection. The rule to remember here is that light should fall not on the mirror but on the person before it. That goes for daylight and artificial light.

Here's an idea to keep peace with the chilly members of the family, not a new idea but a tried-and-true one -- the faithful weather strip. Placed around windows and doors it keeps out cold air leaks and cuts down the fuel bill. If you live in a rented house and object to paying even as little as 6 to 10 cents a foot for weather-stripping, you can make your own by cutting strips from an old automobile tire and tacking them around the windows.

To keep peace among the youngest children in the family, have plenty of shelves in the nursery where they can keep their own possessions -- books and toys and so on. Be sure the shelves are low enough so small hands can reach them easily.

Several good reading lamps beside comfortable chairs also help keep the peace on winter evenings. If everyone has a place to read, you'll avoid the grand rush and skirmish for the favorite chair in the house. A good movable lamp like a simple bridge lamp that the children can use for table games or cutting out pictures on the rug will also help prevent war and make for amity on all sides.

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